

## Sample Letter Requesting a Diocesan Mass in October in Observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)

Drafted by the National Catholic DVAM Partners Committee Leadership Team: Julia Dezelski (USCCB) and Lauri Przybysz and Sharon O'Brien (Catholics For Family Peace Initiative)

Contact: [catholicsforfamilypeace@gmail.org](mailto:catholicsforfamilypeace@gmail.org)

Date: 6-8 months lead time

To:

From:

Re: Request for a Diocesan Mass in October in Observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)

Pope Francis has declared a "Year of *Amoris Laetitia* Family" (March 19, 2021 - June 26, 2022), encouraging the Church to find new and creative ways to accompany families. As Domestic Violence Awareness Month, October is an ideal month to accompany families who experience domestic violence and abuse.

Unfortunately, domestic violence occurs in Catholic families. Catholic psychologist Dr. Christa Welland provides research data in her book, *How Can We Help to End Violence in Catholic Families?: A Guide for Clergy, Religious, and Laity*, downloadable in six languages for free at [paxinfamilia.org](http://paxinfamilia.org). It is most unfortunate that 1 in 15 children are exposed to intimate partner violence each year, and 90% of these children are eyewitnesses to this violence (see [ncadv.org/statistics](http://ncadv.org/statistics)). [could insert local stats. Google your local Coalition Against Domestic Violence for information. <https://ncadv.org/statistics> is a good source.]

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) addresses the issue of domestic violence and abuse in the pastoral statement, *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*. The statement is posted in English and Spanish on the USCCB website and is available in print, along with a resource card that lists eleven indicators of abuse and contact information for help in the USCCB online store. A companion video, *When You Preach...Remember Me*, is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3R3PCOkEf8>.

I am a member of the National Catholic Domestic Violence Awareness Month Partners, co-hosted by Dr. Julia Dezelski, Assistant Director, Marriage & Family Life Ministries at the USCCB, and Dr. Sharon O'Brien of Catholics For Family Peace. Since 2017, with the support of the Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, an annual Mass in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) has been celebrated every October at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. The goal of the Partners group is to increase the number of dioceses that host a Mass nationwide.

We believe there is hope, help, and healing for all. A diocesan Mass and homily (at the Cathedral) during Domestic Violence Awareness Month would provide an opportunity to share

the Church's pro-life teaching on this issue. I request we discuss scheduling a Mass in October as part of Respect Life month.

Catholics For Family Peace is dedicated to providing resources at [www.catholicsforfamilypeace.org](http://www.catholicsforfamilypeace.org). More resources are available at: <https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/domestic-violence>

(Closing statement of your choice)